

# The Colorado Springs Gazette

## D-3 school held up as example

[http://www.gazette.com/articles/schools\\_33571\\_\\_\\_article.html/students\\_gap.html](http://www.gazette.com/articles/schools_33571___article.html/students_gap.html)

By Shari Cheney Griffin

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Students at Janitell Junior High School in Widefield School District 3 know what to expect when they slide into their seats each period.

Whether it's math, art or English, there's a "focus time" at the start of every class, said Carly Grantz, language arts teacher. It's a few minutes to review basic skills, such as vocabulary or grammar in English.

It's an example of the high academic and behavioral expectations throughout the building, she said.

"Kids come in. They know what to do. They get started," she said.

Janitell is one of eight schools profiled in a report released Tuesday by the Colorado Department of Education. The report, looking for schools closing the achievement gap, was written by Amy Anderson of the Donnell-Kay Foundation and Dale DeCesare of Augenblick, Palaich & Associates. The Piton and Donnell-Kay foundations paid for the study.

The report highlighted common practices among the eight schools that helped reduce the difference between the test scores of poor and minority students when compared to other students. Those practices should be emulated by other schools, the report said.

A total of 39 schools — 10 from the Pikes Peak region — were identified in the report, but funding limited visits to the eight schools profiled, Anderson said.

High expectations, one of the items mentioned by Grantz, is on the list. So are things such as using data, having teachers involved in making decisions at the school and providing time for collaboration.

"Collaboration is number one," Grantz said.

Lunchtime is spent eating with others in her department, she said, discussing the best way to teach a concept or how to reach students who are having trouble.

"Two heads, five heads are better than one," she said.

Even during hall duty, teachers talk about test results and how it should change their teaching, said math teacher Paul Redlinger.

While teachers have collaborated for quite some time at Janitell, said Principal Aaron Hoffman,

“we’ve done a much better job of using data to our advantage.”

Data from frequent, short-term tests — which could be as simple as a chapter quiz, Hoffman said — allow teachers to evaluate if what they are doing is working.

Staff members are constantly adjusting, Hoffman said.

Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones will be talking about the common themes discussed in the report, said Mark Stevens, CDE’s director of communications. Each district superintendent will receive a copy of the report, which is also on the department’s Web site.

There are a variety of unique things that work in specific schools, Stevens said, but the report highlights practices all schools can use.

There isn’t a single answer, Grantz said: “It’s a hundred little things.”

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## LOCAL SCHOOLS

Ten schools in the area were identified in a report released by the Colorado Department of Education on Tuesday as having reduced the difference between the test scores of poor and minority students compared with other students.

### Academy District 20

- Mountain Ridge Middle School

### Falcon District 49

- Ridgeview Elementary School
- Stetson Elementary School

### Fountain-Fort Carson District 8

- Aragon Elementary
- Jordahl Elementary
- Carson Middle School
- Fountain-Fort Carson High School

### Harrison District 2

- James Irwin Charter Middle School

### Widefield District 3

- Janitell Junior High

### Woodland Park District RE-2

- Woodland Park Middle School

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